Design Sense

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International Markets

In this issue

of Design Sense, we will explore some of the opportunities and problems presented by the international markets. Generally speaking, the text is restricted to our own area of competence—as industrial designers and marketing consultants. We have also, however, had to recognize that the U. S. businessman abroad does not always think of himself as a good-will ambassador. Nor does he, in fact, always behave like one. For this reason, the illustrations for our cover and subsequent pages show certain examples of misbehavior in the international market. If these illustrations seem to be saying—and they do—that Common Courtesy is often neglected in the Common Market, they also support our contention that advance knowledge of customs and cultures is essential to successful world trade. All too often, it seems to us, the awareness of a "cultural barrier" comes only after irreparable harm has been done. Many of the companies seeking world markets for their products and services have, of course, anticipated this problem—and developed their plans accordingly. The rub is that many others have not.

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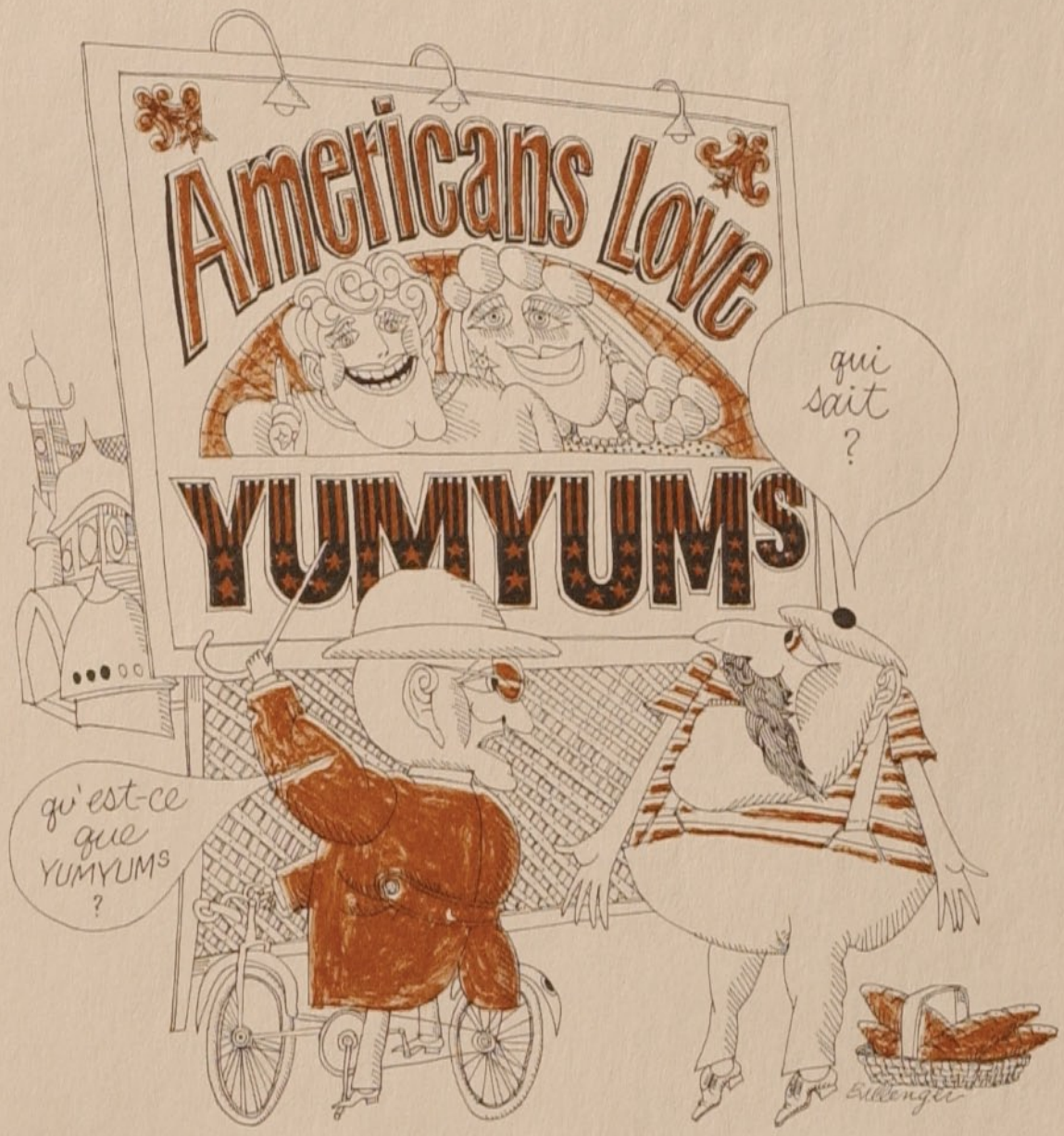

Just because Americans love Yumyums is no reason why Frenchmen should. How many Americans like snails?

One Market Only

In today's business world, compartmentalizing the globe into a series of "national" markets is not only an anachronism, but a pitfall that could prove to be a serious deterrent to a corporation that is seeking its share of the consumers' pound, drachma, peso, or dollar—or even ruble.

The fact of the matter is that today there is only one market, and that is the *international market.*

Does this mean that, overnight, consumers have become the same everywhere, and have developed the same desires, tastes and needs? Not at all. But the reality of the global consumer is closer than ever; closer than it was ten years ago and, unquestionably, it will be much closer ten years hence.

Consumer differences are important, and must be taken into account. But this has always been the case, even where the market is confined to particular regions within one country. Karo syrup is produced in two viscosities, as *Dun's Review* recently pointed out, because Pennsylvanians, perhaps because of the "Dutch" (German) influence, prefer a thicker syrup. Southerners like to buy insecticide in grocery stores, while New Englanders prefer to purchase theirs in drug and variety stores—and for no clearly evident reason.

The corporation that has made its mark on its home ground through understanding the facts essential to a sound marketing program is well-equipped to compete in international trade. "Going international" involves chiefly an extension of function, rather than a change of function.

Perhaps never before in history have the forces and pressures that stimulate trade among nations been more insistent. Exploding populations, a universal striving for a better material existence, buying power and generally increasing economic stability are all playing their part in laying the ground work for what promises to be an unprecedented era of world trade activity and growth.

Much has been written about this developing boom in international trade. But strangely, most of these dissertations and forecasts treat "foreign trade" as something quite separate and apart from domestic trade. It is as if the two were, at best, little more than distant economic cousins.

The Global Product Manager

In most corporations today, the brand or product manager is responsible for his product up to, but not beyond, the national boundary. It would seem that a vast body of water or a sign proclaiming an international border terminates his active interest.

This is not the product manager's fault. It is the traditional way of doing things. The extent and limit of his responsibilities are well defined in the corporate organizational table (or should be).

What is clearly called for is a new appraisal of the product manager's function in light of the realities of today's global market. His responsibility, with most product lines, should no longer be confined by national boundaries. In short, he must become a global product manager.

The question will immediately be asked: "How can one executive possibly be expected to understand all the ramifications of world product managership when it is difficult enough to keep on top of his native market?"

Prior to World War II, or perhaps even ten years ago, the task might well have been insuperable. Today, world differences in advertising, selling, promotion, merchandising and market research methods are sharply reduced, and the gap is narrowing.

International television, such as the Eurovision network, linking European cities, and Telstar, linking the world, have made giant strides toward further breaking down national boundaries—and even opening chinks in the Iron Curtain. These developments, coupled with growing global communication through magazines, books, movies, advertising "overspill" and the mounting flow of tourist travel, have done much to make the "local" product manager concept obsolete.

Whether we like it or not—and most forward-looking firms do like it—we are being forced to evaluate and redefine our "local" ways of doing business. Today, international product managership is not only desirable; it is almost mandatory.

Although the growth of international communications has helped to remove many barriers from the international product manager's path, his job still is undeniably formidable. In some cases, perhaps many, today's "national" product manager may find the jump to "international" beyond his capabilities. It may be that the job will call for a new "breed" with highly specialized talents, just as today's product manager represented a new breed not too many years ago.

The global product manager will, needless to say, require the help of people with specialized knowledge of foreign customs, currency, language and tastes, to name but a few factors. Fortunately, such skills are much more readily available today than they were in years not too far past.

The Trouble With Names

While the "internationalization" of the product manager's role can make an important contribution to a corporation's world market aspirations, it alone is no surefire formula for success. Take one seemingly small facet of the over-all problem: The selection of a suitable name for international commerce.

The proved adaptability of "Schweppes" as a name in world trade, as contrasted to the German hair dressing "Haar Tabac," which might suggest a

Talking business at lunch or other social occasions is about as acceptable to many businessmen as putting your feet on their desk. A knowledge of local customs and mores is an essential part of doing business in international markets.

tobacco product applied to the hair, pretty well typifies the problems all manufacturers must consider in brand name selection. In their respective countries of England and Germany, both products are well-known brand names with high acceptance, but one name, obviously, is not suitable for some markets.

Ideally, a single world brand name should be used for product identification. This can be done most easily when a totally new product brand is being developed. Where a successful, domestic brand is to be sold internationally and the existing name is not usable, the closest possible relationship between the new names and packages should be maintained for communications efficiency. Perhaps phonetic translations can be useful to duplicate at least the spoken name in other languages. Another approach is to use a lateral, rather than literal, translation with a euphemism that expresses the connotation of the original. Instant coffee, for example, can be expressed in French as café poudre or café prêt a servir or café crystalise—none of which, of course, is "instant coffee."

Employing the name used on the product's home ground may seem to be the obvious, the simple and the economical solution. But it only seems that way. The experience of Lippincott & Margulies in this area discloses problems that require the most careful considerations and investigation in such realms as semantics, copyright and patent law, and national preferences and prejudices.

Let's look briefly at a few of the questions that must be answered:

(1.) Does the English name of a product have any other meaning, possibly an unfavorable one, in say Germany or Sweden or any other area in which it is to be marketed? May it even have a different connotation in the British Commonwealth or other countries where English is a major language?

(2.) Even if it has no unfavorable or "wrong" connotation elsewhere, can it be pronounced everywhere? As one example: Spanish and some other languages lack a "w" in their alphabets, an initial letter of many popular U.S. brand names.

(3.) Does the name approximate that of a foreign brand, or duplicate that of another product sold in English-speaking countries?

(4.) If the product name is distinctively American, will national pride, or prejudice, militate against its acceptance?

These points barely scratch the surface of just one aspect of the name problem. They are offered merely to suggest some of the complexities and challenges that face American business—and businesses abroad—in selling internationally.

Packaging for Global Markets

Package design is of compelling importance in international trade. In the U.S.A. and a few other countries, where advertising and promotion have been developed to a high degree, even a poor package might be forced into a market. Outside the U.S. market, however, few parts of the world offer the effectiveness of American sales tools. In some countries, commercial TV is limited or non-existent. In many foreign areas, manufacturers face illiteracy rates that greatly reduce the impact of print media.

Thus, package design becomes all the more important, as the package itself may often be the strongest medium of communication between manufacturer and consumer.

Automotive replacement parts are typical of a product line that offers a real challenge in packaging for world trade, because of the large number of basic parts and variations according to year and model. Uniformity of package design, along with illustration of the parts and identification by number on the package, have helped manufacturers speed their products through primitive distribution systems where reliance on unskilled help is unavoidable, such as in parts of Latin America.

While it may be necessary to make compromises about specific brand names for world markets, there is seldom reason for not having uniform graphic treatment. A sound plan which considers all the problems of brand names and graphic design is the best way to insure the establishment of what can be, in essence, or fact, a world brand.

Outlook for World Brands

What are the advantages of world brands? Why bother establishing an international product? Among the immediate benefits, aside from the obvious production advantages, are the growth of international communications, the increasing mobility of world population, and the ability to apply successful advertising and merchandising programs developed in one area to another.

A long-term, comprehensive viewpoint is of primary importance. Just as company managements cannot afford to ignore future international markets, so they cannot afford to ignore the international aspects of brand naming. To spend years and millions of dollars building consumer acceptance in one country only to discover later that the brand and its proved promotional successes are not transplantable (for lingual or cultural reasons) is, at least, foolhardy. It can be costly beyond all economic sense.

What sounds like a simple assumption—"international business starts with having an international product to sell"—is neither simple nor widely assumed. For if we translate "product" into the more meaningful term "brand name," it is easy to realize

Using a dog as part of your trademark might win you friends in the U.S.A. and other dog-loving countries. But it could have the opposite effect in parts of the Near East, where canines are regarded as the lowest form of life.

that we have yet to see brand consciousness existing in world markets to anything like the extent found within national markets.

Even some of today's more sophisticated world traders find new problems arising again and again, because their initial marketing strategy failed to include an international product or brand name.

But if the challenges are great, the opportunities are greater. The potential for world commerce in the sixties and beyond is truly staggering. Economic forecasting for Western Europe, Japan and the United States has become a risky business because actual results often out-distance predictions.

Within the next decade, Western Europe's level of production will probably top $500 billion. That region's level of domestic personal consumption should expand over 65 per cent. In Japan, such expenditures should double.

In the United States, domestic personal expenditures should see a 60 per cent increase within the next decade. This amounts to an addition of $200 billion to the present U.S. yearly level, bringing the estimated 1972 productive capacity to $835 billion.

The outlook is good, we would say, both for international trade and for world brands.

A System for International Markets

The introduction of a product into a foreign market, whether through export or overseas production, is roughly equivalent to introducing a new product at home. And, just as the corporate endorsement of a new food by General Foods can represent a multi-million dollar sales advantage, a favorable international identity facilitates entry into world markets.

Looking at an international corporate identity system at work, we see Kellogg enjoying 30 per cent of its sales volume in over 100 countries in which foreign languages are spoken. Though "Corn Flakes" becomes "Flikk Flakk" in Norway, and the familiar "snap, crackle, pop" becomes "knisper, knasper, knusper" in Germany, one constant selling identity remains—the Kellogg name. Other companies get a similar result by developing a brand umbrella, such as Betty Crocker, rather than a corporate umbrella.

The rationale for a global corporate identity system is, then, virtually the same as that for domestic programs. Where, domestically, the goal is to achieve impact through uniformity of expression in all media in all states, internationally the same goal is sought among nations. In changing from one arena to another, moreover, geography is of little importance. From the standpoint of developing a global identity, England is closer to the United States than is Mexico.

What's more, the "language barrier" is not as formidable as it might seem at first glance. The "cultural barrier" can be much tougher, even to the point of making a successful product in one country totally unadaptable to another country. We use the world "cultural" here in the sense of national mores, habits, preferences and prejudices.

The design elements of a global corporate identity system are of particular importance. Granted that on many occasions, it may be desirable and even necessary to change a brand name to suit a particular country, the design of a corporate symbol need not change—and thus can serve as the primary identity element relating product and manufacturer.

Design transcends language for there is but one system of geometry, rooted in scientific fact, that serves all mankind. Lacking knowledge of new cultures, the early traders relied exclusively on symbolism for communication. Today, in practice, ESSO's white oval with blue border, or SHELL's yellow sea shell, serve uniformly around the world to identify the products of large, capable organizations—even though it has been found desirable in some areas to render the names in foreign letters.

Brand identification, however, is only one consideration in a complete global corporate identity system. The flexibility of translation for brand names doesn't often apply to corporate identity itself. As an extreme example, Goodyear would no more care to sell under the name of "Bonne Annee" in France than Michelin would use "Little Michael" in English-speaking countries.

The U.S. Rubber Company's recently-introduced "UniRoyal" is an outstanding example of global brand identification. With its introduction in the late summer of 1964, the UniRoyal mark began making its appearance on the tires, chemicals, textiles, plastics and footwear products of U.S. Rubber and its subsidaries in Canada, the United Kingdom and elsewhere around the globe.

There also are cases of large organizations which developed on a world-wide basis over a lengthy period prior to the recognition of the value and need for corporate identity systems.

In the long history of United Shoe Machinery Company, Inc., for example, overseas operations were established under names that were literal translations of the generic terms "united," "shoe" and "machinery." Internationally, the company appeared to be an agglomeration of individual and unrelated firms rather than reflecting a truly world-wide, extremely capable organization. A corporate identity system established for United Shoe Machinery by Lippincott & Margulies brought a unifying element to the company's operations in all parts of the globe.

A classic example among global corporate identifications is, of course, the Chrysler Corporation's "Pentastar." This jewel-like, five-pointed figure, developed by Lippincott & Margulies as part of Chrysler's comprehensive C. I. system, appears on all Chrysler products and facilities the world around. While Simca, Chrysler's French automotive subsid-

Patriotism is a great virtue. But it's not always a popular export.

iary, retains the distinctive styling for automobiles coming from its plants, there can be no mistaking that this popular car is a blood-relative of the U.S.-produced Imperial, Plymouth, Dodge and Chrysler.

It is only natural that as economic opportunities arise, those companies which are best understood—that is, those with the best international identity—will be sought out first. Should a choice rest between two companies with virtually identical degrees of capability, where one, through a global corporate identity system, has achieved recognition and understanding, and the other not, is there any question as to which company would get the nod?

Each Identity System is Unique

Global corporate identity represents an investment in future growth. As the world grows smaller through expanded communications, international operations will account for an increasingly larger share of corporate volume and profit. Those corporations which fully recognize the opportunities ahead will be best prepared to capitalize on them.

If, for example, Trans World Airlines were to operate under separate names, with separate symbols in each country, it would sacrifice its greatest sales asset—that of being recognized as a world carrier. When Pan American World Airways recently decided to call itself Pan Am, it was for purposes of lessening the American-oriented connotation. Nothing was lost because this abbreviated identification was universally used and recognized.

Consider, too, the tremendous efficiency of sponsored world-wide television. It may appear far distant, but is it? International TV is now at a more advanced state than domestic television was in the late '40's. Without an established global corporate identity system, however, the prospective sponsor of 1975 might properly hesitate about making an investment in global TV.

Few companies plunge into foreign markets. They dip a toe in to see how the water is. If inviting, they are ready for deeper incursions.

Can a single international system of identity be established with equal effectiveness throughout the world? It not only can, it *must*, if the international-minded firm is not to face an "agonizing reappraisal" of a confused identity at some later date.

There are no pat formulas for developing a global corporate identity system, just as none has been found—or ever will be—for domestic systems. Each system is unique and must be so if it is to be effective in presenting the unique identity of *one* corporation, or family of companies, and *one* only.

Whether international or domestic, a corporate identity system serves a major function in putting the weight of an entire corporation behind the company's products. An effective system is all the more important internationally, because product diversity is likely to be more extensive on an international basis than on a domestic basis. Standards of living, and all the products that such standards effect, visually fluctuate a great deal more from country to country than from region to region.

No one, for example, has yet developed a truly international mass-market car which uniformly fills universal needs and desires. Despite its adaptability to road and other conditions the world over, Volkswagen has actually a very small share of the U.S. market as compared to its dominance elsewhere.

That we are barely on the threshold of a new era in world trade is unquestioned. We have many good examples of what internationally-minded companies have succeeded in doing to their sales, and more importantly, their profits. While more and more companies are turning their attention to markets away from home, the future is still limitless in new opportunities for corporations alive to the needs of the world—and aware of the need for foresighted and sound planning.

World Production: Shifting Sands

In three areas of primary economic importance—the U.S., Western Europe and Japan—there will be a production jump of over $353 billion in goods for consumer markets by 1972. This figure includes a United States potential increase of $200 billion, in Western Europe a rise of $130 billion, a Japanese increase of $23 billion.

Competition for these world markets will be, and is, tough and complicated. It is no longer safe to assume that the United States will continue to be a major market for supplies of raw materials, while Europe and Japan will be major markets for finished American products.

A case in point is the building materials manufacturing industry in the United States. After World War II—through the accumulative effects of U.S. tariff reduction, "favored-nations" negotiations and various assistance programs—Japan, Italy and England became heavy exporters of certain construction materials. American manufacturers began to feel the pinch, and had to seek protection through tariff increases.

Many American industries were faced with a similar situation. U.S. auto manufacturers seemingly refused to take the small foreign imports seriously, even when the evidence of their consumer-appeal could be seen on every American highway.

The Detroit compact finally slowed the influx from England and Western Europe, but not until MG's, Anglias, Volkswagens, Renaults and Fiats had carved out what at this writing appears to be a permanent niche in the U.S. market.

Whether the lesson has been completely learned is still open to question. Detroit talks now of larger, more powerful compacts—and while Detroit is

If you don't like foreigners, have a sign made for your social club abroad reading "Americans only." And while you're having it made, you may as well have another painted for your plant reading "Going out of Business."

talking, there is evidence that Japan is getting ready to make a major assault on the small-car market with her Datsuns and Toyotas, and perhaps others yet to be heard from.

The U.S. steel industry, which long considered itself invulnerable to serious foreign competition, suddenly found itself bidding violently—and sometimes unsuccessfully—against the product of Europe's and Japan's rejuvenated and revitalized mills.

These and other American producers were late in recognizing the impact of foreign competition. Earlier recognition could have stimulated steps to meet the competition through plant modernization, new product design, improved distribution and better promotion. The moral is that, today, a producer must have an international outlook even when his market is essentially national.

World Trade: Investments Are Soaring

The successful businessman of the next decade will need a greater degree of consumer orientation than now exists in the marketing operations of many firms outside the U.S.A. Some foreign firms with highly-developed marketing capabilities have begun to understand and embrace the marketing concept, but the number is still not large. *(See p. 14 for definition of the marketing concept.)*

It is this marketing know-how that is the greatest asset any company can have in the rough-and-tumble competition for international markets. It is true, of course, that techniques of advertising, packaging and other aspects of marketing that have worked well in one country can seldom be lifted in toto and applied elsewhere with equal success. However, human motivations are basically similar the world over, and if properly adapted to meet local conditions, there is no reason why an approach that works well in one area cannot work well elsewhere.

In a very real sense, as has been stated earlier, there are no strictly national markets today. With the growth of new and vigorous competition from all parts of the world, all markets are simply part of one great international market. The U. S. doesn't *officially* trade with Red China, but through the process of trans-shipments, it does. The company that accepts the one-world market concept is the company that will be best prepared to win and hold its place in the race ahead.

The awareness of businessmen everywhere to the opportunities beyond their own boundaries is indicated by the rise of investments abroad. The United States has increased her investment in Western Europe from $1.7 billion in 1950 to an estimated $10 billion in 1964—a rate of $600 million a year! British, French, German and Italian firms, among others, are all stepping up their investments beyond national borders.

The reasons are both offensive and defensive. Foreign investments allow a company to participate in growing markets in other countries, and (where the investment includes production facilities) to export on a more competitive basis to other countries. They also help to cushion the blow of fluctuating economic ups and downs at home, particularly where the company is operating in a mature, highly competitive market.

If the existing *reasons* for international trade are many and valid, the future *needs* for it are even greater. The world will not, and indeed cannot, accept a static economy. International trade is a categorical imperative of our age. It will not be denied.

World Markets: Time to Re-Evaluate

We have been talking of world trade chiefly in terms of the future. Actually, of course, there are many great names in world commerce that are household words from Patagonia to Pakistan. Among them are such leading corporations as Standard Oil of New Jersey, duPont, Monsanto, Nestle, Unilever, IBM, United Shoe Machinery Co., Pfizer, S. C. Johnson & Son, General Mills, Chrysler, U. S. Rubber, Heinz, Coca-Cola, Volkswagen, Shell, SONY of Japan, Renault, Singer, Rolls-Royce and Sears, Roebuck, Chanel, to name just a few. A most imposing list, certainly.

For those with an awareness of the needs and complexities of the world market, the horizon is wide and without visible limits. The development of overseas markets not only promises greater opportunities for expansion in good times, but can serve as a buffer against economic dislocation during recessionary periods.

The pace is quickening everywhere. Hardly before we become used to the idea of six-hour trans-Atlantic flights by jet, we are promised the two-hour flight by supersonic aircraft. Within months after the first communications satellite, Telstar, went into orbit, a more sophisticated, more dependable model, Syncom, was launched. Computers regarded as the last word in efficiency and ingenuity are hardly in operation before a more efficient, more ingenious model comes along to take its place.

What this means, of course, is that a re-evaluation is needed of international trade. What follows will suggest some of the ways in which this promise can be realized through the techniques of the marketing concept applied to overseas trade.

Doing business in world markets in today's context goes beyond mere exporting to a foreign representative who assumes all local marketing responsibility. This kind of effort denies the entrepreneur an opportunity to exercise what could be his greatest point of superiority — experienced marketing skill. In addition, such limited efforts are in constant jeopardy from aggressive home-based marketers and emerging foreign competition (including the

Treating your foreign help well is important, but remember, you are competing for labor with local industry. Paying much above the going wages may endear you to your overseas employees, but no one else.

very agents to whom the goods are consigned). There is much to be said for licensing as a means of getting a toehold in foreign markets without heavy investment—but such arrangements must be carefully weighed against the company's long-term ambitions and objectives.

There is substantial evidence to indicate that the most successful marketing men of the next decade will be those who commit themselves to a full control of marketing strategy. This does not necessarily imply production facilities in each country—but does demand reorientation of top management thinking, and an investment of time and money.

Getting The Facts —And Using Them

It would be a mistake to assume that any one country or trading bloc has long-term, built-in advantages in world trade. It was not the intention of the Treaty of Rome planners to transform Europe into "one market" for Europeans only. International business on a large scale is still in the development stage. The field is wide open.

The transition from a purely domestic business to a true world enterprise, however, cannot be made in one leap. It requires a whole series of changes in corporate attitude, organization and objectives. It quite often requires substantial investment. And the need for reliable marketing information is enormous.

Here in the United States, business intelligence is communicated freely by the Government, by trade associations and their related journals, and other sources. This is not the case in many other countries, and outside help is often desirable. If the services of a market research firm do seem indicated, the selection must be approached carefully, as the quality of research varies widely. A high degree of selectivity is essential.

The businessman who doesn't take advantage of all the help he can get from these and other sources is asking for trouble. The great tidal movement of international competition is already steadily rising. If the businessman intends to participate actively in world trade, a knowledge of international markets, coupled with a full appreciation and employment of the marketing concept, is essential to his survival.

Only detailed economic studies can, of course, reveal potential supply and demand trends the world-over, trends that relate to industrial growth, money supplies, evolving consumer tastes, the ups and downs of nationalistic vs. internationalistic fervor, technological advance and other factors.

An article of this scope can review, but cannot attempt to deal comprehensively with these complex matters. Fortunately, and helpfully, authoritative statistics are on record, collected by the statesmen and economists working out of Brussels, Geneva, Rome, Paris, London, New York and Washington, D. C., through such organizations as the United Nations, the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, the European Economic Community, the Organization for European Cooperation and Development. Private groups in each country, like the Ford Foundation and the Committee for Economic Development in the United States, have also contributed important research and analysis to the problem.

The information is available in depth; the techniques have been developed to a high degree; the markets are there.

No one can guarantee that even the best product, backed by the best marketing strategy, is going to succeed in the overseas market. The element of risk will always remain as long as human affairs are directed by human wit and human whims.

But this much can be said with assurance: the company that takes advantage of the great wealth of information available, and applies it with intelligence and imagination, is the company that reduces the risks to the narrowest possible margin and, in doing so, stands the best possible chance of realizing the rewards offered by overseas markets now and in the years ahead.

★ ★ ★

The Marketing Concept

As much as it has been written about, talked about, and practiced, the marketing concept is still a term that is not always fully understood in all its implications. For this reason, it may be worth restating our own summation that appeared in the "Special Marketing Issue" of DESIGN SENSE (#31):

"The marketing concept embraces a system or technique for approaching business and business problems. It is the sum total of criteria which we bring to the making of a business decision, rather than any set of facts we may use to document or reinforce a decision. It is how *we do, not* what *we do."*

When properly developed and applied, moreover, the marketing concept serves as a disciplined plan to ensure that all departments of the company—and all service agencies—project and communicate the product or service involved with pre-determined consistency.

Many U.S. firms embrace the marketing concept fully in their domestic dealings, yet seem to ignore it, or at least slight it, when they enter overseas markets. We contend that all lessons learned in the domestic market—and certainly the marketing concept among them—must be applied to international trade.

We are not talking only of a handful of companies with world market aspirations. Among U.S. companies of all types, including manufacturers, more than 3,300 are now doing business directly in at least one foreign market.

As more and more companies enter the international arena with their products, they will discover that they are burdened with unforeseen and complex problems that must be resolved in order to compete successfully. The marketing concept will serve them well.

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